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SUBJECT: SECURITY COUNCIL SPLIT OVER SUPPORT FOR ABBAS

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Summary  
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1. (SBU) In the monthly briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, Michael Williams, the recently appointed UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, said the Middle East was in a time of crisis. Williams focused his briefing on recent events in Gaza and offered two priority recommendations: (1) the international community should support the new Palestinian government formed by Abbas; and (2) immediate action should be taken to open the crossings into Gaza to allow delivery of commercial and humanitarian supplies. Council reaction to the situation was divided. Russia, China, South Africa, Indonesia, Qatar, Panama and Congo declined to explicitly express support for Abbas and his emergency government, while the U.S., U.K., Belgium, France, Italy, Slovakia and Peru called on the international community to rally around Abbas. Most members of the first group blamed the Quartet, the international community, and Israel for actions and policies that contributed to the Palestinian infighting. Most Council members, including the Europeans, called for Israel to promptly release VAT and customs revenues, and urged continued support to the Palestinian people in Gaza. Many delegations also stated a desire for Palestinian unity, and called on the Quartet to facilitate a relaunching of the peace process. In response to calls for dialogue between Fatah and Hamas, Williams said it would be "not easy to overcome the wounds caused by (Hamas') armed insurrection" and expressed doubt that there is currently a basis for renewed dialogue. He praised Abbas, however, for sending a "strong signal" of inclusion by forming a cabinet of independents, technocrats, and Gazans. Familiar themes on Lebanon, including the challenge to the LAF posed by Fatah al-Islam, the assassination of parliamentarian Walid Eido, and the recent rocket attack against Israel, were also discussed.

Williams Calls for Support for Abbas  
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2. (SBU) In his first briefing to the Security Council as UNSCO, Williams traced the events before and after Abbas dissolved the unity government. He noted SYG Ban convened a teleconference of Quartet principals at the height of the crisis, which resulted in a statement of support for Abbas's decisions as "legitimate actions." He said the decision by the U.S. and E.U. to renew direct assistance to the Palestinian Authority "signaled the legitimacy of the new government and the fact that President Abbas's positions are consistent with those of the Quartet." Williams called for political and financial support to be immediately delivered to Abbas. He welcomed the news that Israel was "examining options for the resumption of transfers of VAT and customs revenue and was planning to ease substantially movement restrictions in the West Bank." He also stressed the

immediate need to open crossings. (Note: Full text of his statement e-mailed to NEA/IPA and IO/UNP June 20.)

13. (SBU) During private consultations of the Council that followed his public statement, Williams stated that the brutality and violence in Gaza has led to a rupture in the Palestinian community, and observed that this political rupture is compounded by territorial division. He stressed that Abbas had formed a "good government led by an extraordinary man" (Salam Fayyad). The composition of the emergency government including independents, technocrats, Gazans and "maybe one Fatah member," sent an important message of inclusion. He concluded: "Despite what has happened, Gaza and the West Bank remain one Palestinian territory, administered by one Palestinian Authority headed by President Abbas."

#### Council Divided on Abbas

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14. (SBU) Drawing from reftel, Amb Wolff delivered the U.S. statement, casting the situation as a fundamental choice between extremism and tolerance, and describing USG actions to support Abbas. He also restated USG support for Lebanese Prime Minister Siniora, and expressed concern about Syria's role in the region. Both the U.K. and Belgium called the Hamas action in Gaza "unacceptable." The U.S., U.K., Belgium, France, Italy, Slovakia and Peru explicitly endorsed Abbas's new government as legitimate.

15. (SBU) Russia, China, Indonesia, Qatar, South Africa, Panama and Congo did not/not express support for President Abbas. Russia said responsibility for the recent violence in Gaza fell on many parties, and blamed the Quartet for not

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supporting implementation of the Mecca Agreement. Russian PermRep Churkin also said that Russia opposed any steps that would drive a wedge between the Palestinians. The Qatari DPR blamed the violence on the political and economic "embargo" that had been imposed on the previous Palestinian government.

The South African blamed the situation on Israeli occupation and practices that caused hardship to the Palestinians, including a financial "embargo" and restrictions on movement and access. The Indonesian DPR said the international community should not be distracted by the core problem, which he defined as Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and establishment of a Palestinian state. The Congolese representative attributed the situation to the "consequence of 40 years of occupation of Palestinian territories."

16. (SBU) Russia reiterated its desire for an international conference on the Middle East. Qatar recommended a UN mission to the territories (no one reacted to this request). Most of these delegations expressed support for the June 15 Arab League statement on the situation.

17. (SBU) All delegations, including the Europeans, expressed a desire for Palestinian unity. Those delegations that declined to express support for President Abbas emphasized the need for dialogue between Fatah and Hamas. The Indonesian DPR said "steps to exclude Hamas will not lead to a solution. We cannot have one group at the expense of others." The Chinese stated "regret" at the internal armed conflict and called for a resolution based on dialogue. All delegations also called for Israel to immediately release VAT and custom revenues. Many urged the Quartet to play a role in relaunching the peace process so as to provide a "political horizon."

#### Humanitarian Situation in Gaza

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18. (SBU) Williams said the UN's most immediate humanitarian concern was the re-opening of crossings, particularly Karni,

to allow for food and medical supplies to be imported into Gaza. He noted that Gaza relies almost entirely on imports, and urged immediate action to prevent a humanitarian crisis. He noted that his deputy Kevin Kennedy was in Gaza July 20 and had been consulting with the GOI on this matter. Summing up, he said the two immediate priorities are supporting President Abbas, especially financially, and opening the crossings. He said Hamas had won a victory in Gaza at a terrible cost to the Palestinian people and Palestinian unity.

#### Lebanon and Syria

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¶9. (SBU) Discussion of Lebanon was limited, as many delegations noted that the Council had other opportunities to address that subject. Those delegations that did raise Lebanon echoed Williams's condemnation of the assassination of Lebanese parliamentarian Walid Eido and the recent rocket attack from southern Lebanon into northern Israel. Williams noted that the incident, though without casualties, was the "most serious violation of UNSCR 1701" since last summer. He also reported that Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace had increased and that UNIFIL-led talks concerning the marking of the Blue Line were continuing. On the Tribunal, he said SYG Ban was taking steps to put the court into place in consultation with the GOL.

¶10. (SBU) Recalling his recent visit with high-level Syrian officials, Williams said the Syrians "impressed on me their desire to see the start of negotiations leading to peace with Israel." He also said that Syrian and Israeli interlocutors assured him in recent conversations "that there was no interest in breaking the decades of calm which have prevailed" on the Israeli-Syrian border. The Panamanian PR said the silver lining of the rocket attack from southern Lebanon was that it was condemned by both the Siniora government and Hizballah. Williams later corrected him: Hizballah did not condemn the attack; rather, Hizballah had denied responsibility. The Qatar DPR said the activities of Fatah al-Islam were not in the interests of Palestinians and not representative of Islam.

#### Quartet Meeting

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¶11. (SBU) Noting Council interest in a more proactive Quartet role, Williams said there had been difficulty in scheduling a meeting of principals, but reported that SYG Ban is working toward that end and remains in frequent phone contact with his counterparts. Williams said a meeting of envoys has been tentatively scheduled June 26 in Jerusalem.

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WOLFF